

The Runaways

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Disclaimer: I do not own the characters from How to Train Your Dragon, The Guardian's of Childhood or Rise of the Guardians.

Inspiration: A very long time ago on Tumblr, **yakfrost** made Guardian!Versions of Hiccup, Merida, and Rapunzel. Then I looked on DevArt, and wellâ€¦ That simmered in this little brain here, as well as a comment by **PSYchOtIC-teNdencieS** (**spacycrazylady** on Tumblr) about 'fear being a friend' and Hiccup being the most compatible with Pitch because he's been dealing with fear all of his life, being a Viking and all. I think she deleted that post, though.

The real clincher, though, was **Oreramar**'s Autumnal Alteration. Go find and weep at it's ephemeral beauty. No, I'm serious, go. Leave a review and follow him, he's doing more Guardian!Big Four.

So yeah, here's my contribution to the Seasonal!Hiccup madness. Hope you enjoy!

* * *

><p>The Runaways

Jackson Overland was ten. He was small, energetic, mischievous, but

above all determined. He hated girls, shoes, and being alone. He was ten, and decided he didn't need anyone. His parents hadâ€|that thingâ€|to keep them happy and he was not going to trample on their fussing, no sir! Striking out on his own seemed like the perfect idea. The bright red and orange leaves swirling in and around his town made it an excellent day it seemed for some great adventure to be had. So, Jackson packed up his spare shirt, his toy sheep, put on his moccasins and headed out into the wider world.

The brunet walked, wandering around the leaf-littered path, darting in between the trees when a cart or person walked by. He made it a game, the best game of hide-and-seek he's ever played. It was fun, and daring, for a while, and thenâ€|then the sun went behind the clouds.

The trees started to look less like the ones from home, gnarled and twisted in the cloudy sky like daggers. The shadows flitted underneath the leaf piles, winking at him in wicked delight. He had no idea how long he'd been walking, or which way it was to return home. _'No worries, just keep walking and maybe I'll walk across the whole world,' _he thought. _'It's still round, right?' _The boy shivered. He tried to whistle, like his father showed him, but it was broken sound, hollow. His toes squish uncomfortably in his moccasins, and he drops next to a tree, leaning up against it. He pulls his sheep out, running his fingers through it's fluffy sides. Jackson curls up on himself, wishing for someone, _anyone_ to come down the path.

The wind ruffles his hair affectionately, and the sound of uneven footsteps passes his way. Brown eyes dart up, searching for the person, aching to see a face.

They land on a fallen tree log, where a teenager was balancing as if on a beam, arms outstretched, one foot raised carefully upwards. He wore a strangely fluffy vest - not one of cow or sheep hide, but something furrier, more suited to cold weather. Under it was a deep green shirt and brown slacks. A belt of brown leather, studded with metal held up a small dagger and sheath. Over it was a large tan satchel with a tooth for a clasp. One foot was booted in an another example of leather and the fluffy vest, but the other wasn't a foot. A metal attachment, thin and uneven against the rest of him, had sprouted out of his left knee. A mess of leaves had tangled themselves in his reddish-brown hair, dusting his shoulders with the red and gold of the forest.

The teenager put his good foot on the log, lifting the other, concentrating on them. Suddenly, his face darted up, meeting Jackson's. "Hey, kid!" Blunt teeth moved into a smile. His face looked like it was stuck in the middle of youth and age. Shadows of the man he could be battled for space with the rounder, brighter features of his childhood. His eyes shone the brightest, like deep amber cracked with yellow-gold lightning. The teen dipped his head down, shedding leaves as he went. "What'cha running from?" he continued, voice a little raspy, but gentle.

"What?" Jackson asked, confused by the question. He had come to the conclusion that his foot was weird, but the teen talked to him like he was _there_, not something to be seen and not heard, so he must be alright.

"Well, you're running from something, right? Otherwise you wouldn't be here." The teen dropped down, walking closer.

"Here?" Now that he looked, it seemed the leaf-covered ground stretched out into the horizon, meeting a dusty, golden sky which had two suns!? Jackson blinked and counted again. Two sunsâ€|no, threeâ€|and a moon right above him, and another one caught in the branches of an overlooking birch tree. A strange roar sounded above him, and shadows flew, like birds, but not. There were parts of the sky that didn't quite fit, like a patchwork quilt. "What's here?"

"My domain, the Lost Forest."

"Do-main?" The boy sounded the word out, unfamiliar.

The teen was closer, and Jackson could see thousands of freckles patterned on his skin. "You know, my home. You've got one of those, right?"

Jackson shook his head.

"No home?" His voice was concerned and kind of scratchy, "Did you just pop up out of nowhere?" The teen leaned down and put his hands on his thighs, airily inspecting Jackson. His amber eyes shone with warm curiosity.

The boy replied with a shaken head. "No." he added, offended at the stranger's lack of knowledge.

The wild teen stood back up, "Oh, that's too bad, haven't seen that happen before, supposed to be amazing. Goodbye then." He turned on his metal, stepping surely away.

"No! Wait, don't go!" Jackson has had enough of being alone. The boy jumped up, scattering the leaves beside him and ran after the teenager. "I'm-I'm coming with you!"

"Alright," The teen shrugged, thin arms jostling as if on puppet strings. "if you're running away, I guess it doesn't matter who you travel with." He looked at Jackson with warm eyes, somehow seeing the fear that they boy tried hard to conceal. "I'm Hiccup, by the way."

A snicker tumbled out into the air. "Hiccup? Really?"

"Honest to Gods! Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, Dragon Master and Heir of Autumn, at your service." He said in an official-sounding voice, pausing to bow to the boy, earning a smile.

The wayward child stuck out his hand like his mother taught him, "Jackson. Jack to my friends." Hiccup knelt down and shook it with a freckled one.

"Okay, Jack, let's get going. If my calculations are correct-" He traced the patchwork sky with his hand, "-nightfall will be in 7 hours. We've got three suns and one crescent moon to see by until then. Got your things?"

Jackson lifted up his sheep. "Yep." The wind blew crisp air in their

direction, as if urging them on. The boy and the spirit walked comfortably, sometimes talking, as Jack was a sociable child, and sometimes marveling at the sky and the carpet of leaves stretching around them. They were partway into Jack's retelling of a massive prank that he pulled on one of the older kids when the boy started falling behind.

"You tired? C'mon, I'll carry you." Suddenly, Jack was full of energy and practically jumped onto the spirit's back, tugging him close. The vest was comfy and smelled faintly of spice, and he buried his nose in it. "Hey, you never answered my question. What are you running from?"

Jackson mumbled into the fur.

"I couldn't quite hear that."

Jack pulled his face out to tell him that he most definitely isn't running away from anything, when he spied a figure walking beside them. He was tall, taller than Hiccup, taller than even Jackson's father who was the tallest person the boy had ever known. The figure was dark, with piercing yellow eyes and a smile made of sharp teeth and sinister fondness.

"Who's he?" the boy shivered, as if saying it out loud made the apparition smile wider.

Hiccup took one glance beside him. "That's the Boogeyman." He turned his head barely to the side, "Hello, Pitch." The Autumn Spirit voiced in a clipped, dry tone.

"Why, good day to you too, Hiccup. Might I ask who your little friend is?" His voice was powerful, old and with a little hint of an accent which scared Jackson and made him hold tighter. Hiccup kept walking at an even pace, rubbing small circles into the boy's legs in an effort to comfort him.

The Autumn Spirit was contemplating, 'None of your business.' when his passenger spoke up.

"I'm scared."

The world stopped because of that one sentence. Pitch's eyes gleamed and he smiled. Jack shut his eyes and felt the world fall out from under him, the air surrounding him with paralyzing fear.

Then, a voice rang through the darkness. "I know. But we're gonna get through this, alright? Jack, you with me?" It brought him out of the dark, leading him back to reality, where shadows were surrounding him and Hiccup. The Spirit said something that made the Boogeyman frown for a split second, and then the boy gasped as Hiccup jumped away just as the shadows dived for them.

The wind caught the two and carried them like they were autumn leaves. They landed in a circular area surrounded by large, overbearing oak trees. Jack was set down, and Hiccup knelt, looking at him with his cracked amber eyes. The Spirit coaxed a small smile from the boy with one of his own lopsided ones.

"It's okay, Jack. Pitch just likes to be a big jerk and scare

everyone."

Jackson fidgeted with his hands, finally finding his voice. "The Boogeyman? He's real?"

"Of course he's real. Why would your parents tell you about him if he wasn't?" His tone changed from concerned to a little accusing. He smile faded when Jackson started backing away. "Woah, kid, what are you doing?"

"I'm a bad kid. He's gonna take me away." He was clutching the sheep almost abusively, digging his fingers through the soft fur in an effort to comfort himself.

The freckled teen knelt down again, putting a hand on Jack's shoulder. "No, he's not. You're not bad, Jack." Hiccup tilted his head in mock thought. " Misguided, yes. But bad, no I don't believe that." He was being serious, mouth pursed and eyebrows pressed close together.

Still not convinced, the boy frowned.

"Listen, Jack, you can't let fear control you like this. You'll have to be brave for the people you care about. Can you do that for me?" Unsure, Jackson nodded.

Hiccup stood up, shaking the leaves in his hair, not letting go of the boy's hand. "Then, c'mon, we'd better get going."

"Where?"

"Does it matter when you're running away?" Jackson thought that was a very good point and was content to be dragged along the never-ending pathway of crispy red and orange leaves.

"Jackâ€¦". A quiet voice shifted through the trees. Hiccup held on tighter. "You know you can't stay away from me foreverâ€¦" Pitch was there with them, coming closer to strike and Jackson shivered, holding onto his friends for support.

Hiccup stopped for a second, then held his hand to his mouth and let out a bright, sharp whistle. A gust of wind came to their aid, carrying with it hundreds of leaves that plastered themselves all over the Boogeyman, making him stumble and fall over backwards.

Jackson laughed. It was almost forced, an unexpected chortle that made his guardian stop and look at him, the dime-a-dozen brunet with dark eyes and a small smile that never truly went away. Hiccup held his own smile in an instant. A quiet rushing sound came from where Pitch had fallen, and the two dart away, hand in hand, wind at their backs, laughing. "Did you see the look on his face? Should've done that ages ago!"

Jackson, meanwhile, could barely breathe. He gave Hiccup his biggest smile.

"Hehe, so you like that, huh? Interestingâ€¦" Amber eyes sparked with amusement. They stop and rest when the trees have made a circle

around them, leaving the two in a wide open space. The only moon in sight is full, shining white in a cherry-colored sky.

Hiccup broke away from him, going to a pathway between two ancient trees. "Soâ€¦where do you want to go? Europe? Australia? I know the guy who made Australiaâ€¦he's a bit grumpy, but _loves _kids."

He throws up his hands and the sky starts shimmering behind him, between the trees coloring bright blue. A dry wind passes from it and if he strains his ears, Jackson could hear odd bird calls from the distance. Small fingers reflexively clutch at the coarse hair of his doll, and he suddenly remembers his mother making it for him.

He knows where he wants to be.

"Can you take me home?"

At first Jackson thought that he might have said something wrong, because the Spirit's eyes flashed, mouth quirking down for a split-second. Then he smiled with his whole body, as if he knew that this would happen from the start.

Still nervous, Jackson picked up his feet to back from where they came. "It's about a morning's walk that wayâ€¦sorry if it troubles you."

A soft, warm chuckle floated in the air. Jackson felt as though he was missing something, like a joke was being played and he wasn't a part of it. "Actually," Hiccup was suddenly next to him, guiding him past the leaf-covered ground and through another gate of trees. "We're already there."

"What?" And there was his house, just a little farther. Jackson whooped and ran as fast as he could, leaving the Spirit in the flurry of his ever-present leaves.

He was home, and that was all that mattered.

Epilogue

Hiccup watched as Jackson blew away on the wind, back to his family. He smiled, and knew it was a full one, pent up with tears and over 1,000 years of seeing this happen, again and again.

A shadow pulled up to his right. "Why do you do that? You'll never be seen if you keep sending them away."

Despite the irritated pinch in his shoulder's and purse of lips, Hiccup wasn't mad. Pitch had just been doing his job, however unpleasant. Maybe that's the reason that they gravitate toward each other: Pitch was never quite ashamed of what he was, and Hiccup had to respect that. There were limits to their strange companionship, though. "Maybe I don't want to be seen. Maybe I don't want all of that power. I'm fine here, doing my job, helping lost boys get home, ever think of that?" He turns to face the larger specter, resolute frown upon his freckled face.

A perfect, alluring little sentence spilled out of rough lips and sharp teeth, "But don't you ever want more?" Hiccup sees the loneliness, the desperation, practically reeking off of the manâ€¦he

wants so bad for it to be the Dark Ages again, back when he was powerful, when his shadow reached across the globeâ€¦

And he denies it. "What I _want _- is someone to talk to. And you are not that someone. Go away, Pitch. Find another bed to hide under." Things had changed since the Dark Ages. Hiccup knows that, like he always knows that you cannot have the past again, no matter how much you want it. The Spirit waved his hand, as if banishing the Boogeyman would only take that much.

Soot-grey lips pursed, quietly hopeful eyes flattened into irritated yellow disks, and the desperate man is tucked away underneath the folds of his own cloak. "Fine, then. So long, Hiccup." and he drops underneath the leaves, out of sight.

"Goodbye, Pitch." and the sound is almost a sigh, a plea for him to come back. Then he hears the Wind, impatient as ever, whipping around him and sending thousands of bright red, orange, and yellow spots up in the air.

"You got it, bud." and he jumps into the air, wondering where it will take him this time.

****The End****

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><p>Author's Notes:

From what I could gather, HTTYD takes place in 300's, roughly 1500 years before Jack was even born. Yeah, Hiccup's been around for a while. He made it to old age with Toothless, then about 10-20 years after he was made into a Spirit, The Dark Ages happened. He actually had a friendly relationship with Pitch until then. Hiccup became really good at calming people down after Pitch riled them up. People fear change, after all. Something happened between the Dark Ages and now, because Hiccup refuses Pitch's company.

Hiccup's Domain, the Lost Forest, has holes in it that can transport people all across the globe. It's how he can travel and do his first job, bring Autumn. He's got a pretty good grasp on how it works, and can lead people out of it if they get _too_ lost. Somewhere in it is a fully stocked blacksmith stall as well as a weapons cabinet. After I thought about it for a little while was not unlike the Forest from Nightmare Before Christmas.

He kept his Dragon Satchel from the TV show, as well as Astrid's headband for use as a belt. I also like to think that the leaves in his hair replace themselves depending on the mood. When he get's mad, poison oak and nettles fall out, and when he's giving out wisdom or stories, acorns and nuts come loose.

Jackson, I'm not so sure about how I did him. Too easyâ€¦feels suspicious. And the idea that Wind has always liked him, I just couldn't leave alone.

Pitch, I honestly think that he's a manipulator. While I'm pretty sure that _some_ of his loneliness and anger is real, I think that he keeps a pretty tight leash on it and only lets it out when it benefits him to do so, say, when he's trying to convince people to

come over to his side. Other than that, he's fairly polite and is even quietly kind to any spirits that come his way. 'Easier to catch flies with honey, than vinegar', he'll say. He does it because that's how he just is. As much a part of him as Hiccup's leaves and Jack's Frost.

Mmyepâ€|I think that's it. Thank you for reading. Please leave a review!

****I11****

End
file.